

Forestry

State forest land area and title deeds. According to records kept by the Department of Forests, the total area of state forest land is 163.818 hectares. Since the extent of this area could not be confirmed with data of the Department of Lands and Surveys, upon recommendation of our Office, the Department of Forests requested the Department of Lands and Surveys to provide information in relation to the total area of forest land registered in the name of the Republic, in order to detect and correct any differences that might ensue, and issue the relevant title deeds.

The acting Director of the Department informed us that the Department of Lands and Surveys continues the compilation of a list of state forest land for the forests of Troodos, Macheras and Adelfi, and by letter dated 5.9.2011 informed the Department that the completion of the process of issuing title deeds for the above forests, would take about one year.

Long term lease contracts for state forest land.

(a) Lease contract for part of the Orites state forest. In order to meet the obligations of the Republic of Cyprus in increasing the contribution of renewable energy in total energy consumption to 6% by 2010, the Council of Ministers, with its decision dated 5.12.2007, approved the lease of part of the Orites state forest with an area of 39.025 m², for the purpose of constructing a wind farm.

Following the installation of the wind farm, it was found that certain of the terms of the lease were not met, while an inspection by the Department of

Agriculture revealed deficiencies in the space enclosure. The Department of Forests, in its letter to the lessee dated 25.1.2012, stated that the rehabilitation of the site, which is a substantial contractual obligation, remains pending.

The acting Director of the Department informed us that the issue of fencing has been settled, while the tenant has committed to complete much of the site restoration in 2012, indicating that, because of the nature of the lease, the best option would be to convince the tenant to fulfill his obligations, before considering other measures.

Mapping and Forestry Cadastre preparation. The mapping and preparation of a Forestry Cadastre for the leased forest land in the Achna forest is pending. According to information we received from the acting Director of the Department of Forests, the delay in its completion, estimated before the end of 2012, is attributed to the heavy workload of staff of the Surveying Sector and the related Forest Division.

Developments in areas of land consolidation. It was observed that certain land consolidation areas have been subject to intense pressure from other developments, such as residential, tourist, industrial development etc. This phenomenon is most pronounced in areas close to urban and tourist centres. An indicative example is that of the consolidation plan in Peyia area, which was completed in 1989 and included 7.425 hectares of land consolidation, divided into 1.092 land plots. According to the Department of Land Consolidation, by 2010, 407 (37%) of the above plots have been included in development zones and in another 234 plots (38,5%) buildings have been constructed. A similar phenomenon is observed in Neo Chorio in Paphos, the

consolidation plan for which was completed in 1991, since, according to a satellite picture, villas have been constructed in most of the area. We were informed that these consolidation plans were completed years ago, and the land was subject to intense development pressure, which could not have been foreseen. The Department of Land Consolidation is preparing a study on the development noted in land consolidation areas and we asked to be informed of the results. We also asked to be informed of the measures taken to avoid the inclusion of land consolidation areas, for which the state has spent significant amounts beyond administrative costs, in development zones.

As we were informed by the acting Director of the Department of Land Consolidation, the establishment of development zones is under the jurisdiction of the competent town planning authority (Town Planning Council for Local Plan areas and the Department of Town Planning and Housing for Policy Statement areas). Although, in recent years, the Department of Land Consolidation represents the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment in the Town Planning Council, under the current procedure the Department of Town Planning and Housing requests that information and suggestions pertaining to the jurisdiction of the Department of Land Consolidation are submitted only in the early stages of the modification of urban area design or preparation of a Local Plan. The acting Director of the Department of Land Consolidation informed us that the Ministry and the Department repeatedly expressed their opposition to the extensions of development zones in irrigated areas of fertile agricultural land, in which public investment was carried out for land consolidation and irrigation projects. The Department holds the position that, in cases where such

extensions are absolutely necessary, these should be kept to a minimum, following the necessary prior consultations. Regarding the study prepared by the Department on developments in areas of land consolidation, the acting Director of the Department informed us that it has not yet been completed.